

CT Mental Health Counselors Association (CMHCA)



Connecticut Mental Health Counseling Association

Testimony before the Public Health Committee

March 4, 2015

H.B. 6294 Testimony

As the current President of the Connecticut Mental Health Counselors Association, I Jonathan Stern, and the current association membership, am joining with the Connecticut Counseling Association to address the significant concerns that are brought about by the proposition of H.B. 6294 which have the potential to erode the integrity of the License for Professional Counselors.

The Connecticut Mental Health Counselors Association is both a professional association and sub-group of the Connecticut Counseling Association that represents Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) who work in a variety of state wide community, private and public Mental Health and Substance Abuse treatment facilities.

The current requirements for the LPC are completing 60 graduate semester hours in counseling on specified content areas, achieving a passing score on the National Counselor Examination, and acquiring 3,000 hours of postgraduate-degree-supervised counseling experience. This bill would count graduate internship hours toward the 3,000 hour supervision, thereby decreasing the total number of required postgraduate-degree hours.

The membership of the Connecticut Mental Health Counselors Association are strongly opposed to H.B. 6294 for the following reasons:

- A 3,000 hour post-degree supervision period is a basic professional standard for mental health clinicians of all disciplines. Licensed Clinical Social Workers, another widely

recognized licensed profession for the provision of mental health treatment, includes a completion of 3,000 post graduate clinical experience. The purpose of such post graduate requirements is to facilitate the solidification of adequate clinical experience and the passage of H.B. 6294 would serve to undermine the professional standards of the field.

- The community that is served by Professional Counselors in the mental health field are in dire need of competent and experienced counselors. Often times, individuals who seek services to assist with issues related to mental illness and substance abuse are at risk of harm, and a decrease in post graduate experience as a requirement of licensure is likely to increase the risk of harm that the clients themselves are exposed to.
- Consistent with requirements in Connecticut, Licensed Professional Counselors in most other states are required to complete a 3000 hour post-degree period of supervised experience prior to licensure. Reducing the minimum supervised, post-degree counseling hours would also make training requirements for LPCs in Connecticut less stringent than training requirements in other states.
- The reduction of the post graduate clinical hours in Connecticut would undermine the national standard of mental health care services provided by Professional Counselors.

In the current era of change with regard to streamlining the delivery of mental health and substance abuse treatment by delivering the most effective care as possible in the most cost effective method as possible, the luxury of relaxation of standards for competence, and by extension, the reduction of the overall standard of delivery of care simply does not exist!

CMHCA urges the Public Health Committee to uphold the current 3,000 hour post graduate standard requirement and instead propose increases in training requirements, such as coursework in diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders and clinical internship during the master's degree program. The Public Health Committee is strongly urged to oppose H.B. 6294, and if deemed by the committee to be helpful, it would be my pleasure to meet with you to discuss the issues CMHCA raises.

Regards,

Jonathan Stern, LPC

Connecticut Mental Health Counseling Association President

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